

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SNM-05 MED-03 DEAE-00 CIAE-00
INR-07 IO-14 JUSE-00 NSAE-00 TRSE-00 USIA-15
NSC-05 OES-07 OMB-01 SCS-06 HA-05 HEW-06 /087 W
-----077152 220325Z /75

R 211915Z NOV 77
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8637

UNCLAS ROME 19084

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SNAR
SUBJECT: AVAILABILITY OF LEGALLY CONTROLLED MEDICATIONS TO
AMERICANS TRAVELLING ABROAD

REF.: A. ROME 18010, B. STATE 255976

1. IN REPLY TO EMBASSY QUERY, MINISTRY OF ELATH'S DIRECTORATE
OF SOCIAL MEDICAL SERVICES HAS PROVIDED THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION
SOMEWHAT ADDITIONAL TO THAT SUPPLIED FROM NON-OFFICIAL SOURCES
AS REPORTED REFTEL A.

2. ITALAN REGULATIONS FOR PROGRAMS OF METHADONE AND OTHER
DRUG MAINTENANCE ACTIVITIES HAVE NOT YET BEEN FULLY ESTABLISHED.
THE CENTRAL HEALTH COUNCIL HAS ADVISED THE LIMITATION OF METHADONE
MAINTENANCE TO ADULT ADDICTS WHO HAVE NOT BEEN REHABILITATED,
AFTER EXAMINATION BY A TEAM OF EXPERTS INCLUDING A PSYCHOLOGIST
AND A MAGISTRATE. METHADONE SUPPLY IS RESTRICTED TO HOSPITALS AND
MUNICIPAL PHARMACIES. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR REGIONAL
GOVERNMENTS HAVE BEEN PREPARED BUT NOT YET SIGNED BY THE
MINISTER OF HEALTH REGARDING THE HANDLING OF ADDICTS WHO TRAVEL
FROM ONE REGION TO ANOTHER. METHADONE IS PRESENTLY SO REGISTERED
UNDER THE LAW AS TO REQUIRE A SPECIAL PRESCRIPTION AND FOR ONLY
LIMITED NUMBERS OF DOSES. IN PRACTICE IT IS USED AS AN
ANALGESIC, DOCTORS BEING AUTHORIZED TO PRESCRIBE METHADONE TO
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ALLEVIATE ACUTE WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS, RATHER THAN FOR MAINTENANCE.
THIS ASPECT OF THE LAW IS CURRENTLY UNDER CLOSE SCRUTINY AS
POSSIBLY INTERFERING WITH THE RIGHTS OF PHYSICIANS AS WELL AS
WITH THE RIGHTS GRANTED TO ADDICTS BY RECENT LEGISLATION.

3. THE ISSUE OF THE TRANSPORTATION OF DRUGS, SUCH AS METHADONE
ACROSS INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARIES TO AND FROM ITALY IS ONLY PARTLY

DEALT WITH IN ARTICLE 50 FF.(A COPY OF WHICH IS BEING POUCHED SEPARATELY). THE MINISTRY POINTS OUT THAT ALTHOUGH THERE IS NO PENALTY FOR POSSESSION OF SUCH DRUGS AS METHADONE FOR AMOUNTS FOR PERSONAL USE, THE LAW FAILS TO SPECIFY THE QUANTITATIVE THRESHHOLD BETWEEN PERSONAL USE AND TRAFFICKING. THIS ISSUE IS CURRENTLY UNDER DEBATE AS IT REFERS TO HEROIN; AS IT RELATES TO OTHER DRUGS SUCH AS METHADONE, IT HAS NOT BEEN ADDRESSED.

4. THE MINISTRY HAS SUPPLIED A PROVISIONAL LIST OF TREATMENT CENTERS AND AUTHORITIES WITH WHOM, AT LEAST IN THEORY, AMERICAN ADDICT TRAVELERS COULD CORRESPOND TO ESTABLISH AN ARRANGEMENT FOR THE SUPPLY OF METHADONE. THE LIST IS BEING POUCHED SEPARATELY TO EUR/WE FOR FORWARDING. IN ANY EVENT, THE CAVEAT REMAINS AS EXPRESSED IN REFTEL A.; THE PRESENT SITUATION IS HIGHLY AMBIGIOUS, DRUGS SUCH AS METHADONE ARE NOT NECESSARILY AVAILABLE AT OR THROUGH THE CENTERS LISTED. AN AMERICAN TRAVELER IN METHADONE MAINTENANCE WHO EXPECTS TO VISIT ITALY SHOULD ALLOW AMPLE TIME FOR COMPREHENSIVE CORRESPONDENCE WITH ITALIAN AUTHORITIES IN ROME (ON THE MINISTRY'S LIST, UNDER LAZIO) BEFORE MAKING FIRM TRAVEL PLANS.GARDNER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DRUGS, LAW, DRUG CONTROL, MEDICAL CARE
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 21-Nov-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977ROME19084
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770432-0280
Format: TEL
From: ROME
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19771135/aaaabdh1.tel
Line Count: 82
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: b1b2b114-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 ROME 18010, 77 STATE 255976
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21-Jan-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 506234
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AVAILABILITY OF LEGALLY CONTROLLED MEDICATIONS TO AMERICANS TRAVELLING ABROAD
TAGS: SNAR, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/b1b2b114-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009